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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 06 ROME 002657

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR E, EB - CHASE, EB/TPP/BTT - MALAC,
OES/ETC - NEUMANN AND IO/EDA - KOTOK
USDA FOR FAS - BRICHEY, LREICH AND RHUGHES
AND ARS - BRETTING AND BLALOCK
USAID FOR EGAT - SIMMONS, MOORE, BERTRAM AND LEWIS

FROM U.S. MISSION TO THE UN AGENCIES IN ROME

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [ETRD](#) [SENV](#) [AORC](#) [WFP](#)

SUBJECT: BIOTECHNOLOGY: WFP INTERNAL GUIDANCE ON
GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS

REF: ROME 2436

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED. PLEASE HANDLE ACCORDINGLY.

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: IN AN INTERNAL "CORPORATE MESSAGE" RECENTLY DISTRIBUTED TO ITS STAFF WORLDWIDE, SENIOR MANAGEMENT OF THE UN WORLD FOOD PROGRAM (WFP) STRESSED THAT THE ORGANIZATION IS NEUTRAL IN THE DEBATE ON GENETICALLY MODIFIED (GM) FOODS. EMPLOYEES ARE INSTRUCTED TO EMPHASIZE THAT (1) WFP'S RESPONSIBILITY IS "TO MOBILIZE AS MUCH SAFE, HEALTHY FOOD AS POSSIBLE FOR THE WORLD'S HUNGRY;" (2) ALL WFP-DISTRIBUTED FOOD IS SAFE FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION; (3) WHO AND FAO STATE THERE ARE NO KNOWN HEALTH RISKS; (4) WFP RESPECTS THE LAWS AND REGULATIONS OF DONOR AND RECIPIENT GOVERNMENTS, (5) GOVERNMENTS ARE FREE TO CHOOSE WHETHER OR NOT TO ACCEPT GM FOODS, AND (6) WFP WILL DO ITS BEST TO IDENTIFY ALTERNATIVES, BUT CANNOT GUARANTEE NON-GM FOOD WILL BE AVAILABLE. ALTHOUGH WFP CONTINUES TO COME IN FOR CRITICISM BY CERTAIN GOVERNMENTS AND ACTIVISTS, WE BELIEVE IT HAS BEEN LARGELY SUCCESSFUL IN FINDING THE CORRECT BALANCE ON THIS CONTENTIOUS ISSUE. END SUMMARY.

2. (SBU) U.S. MISSION HAS OBTAINED A COPY OF A JUNE 7 COMMUNICATION FROM WFP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JIM MORRIS TO WFP STAFF WORLDWIDE, PROVIDING GUIDANCE ON HOW TO RESPOND TO QUERIES REGARDING FOOD DERIVED FROM GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS. THE TEXT OF THE INTERNAL DIRECTIVE -- INCLUDING A COVER LETTER TO STAFF, THE CORPORATE MESSAGE, AND GUIDANCE IN THE FORM OF QS AND AS -- IS REPRODUCED BELOW AFTER PARA 6.

U.S. MISSION COMMENT

3. (SBU) WFP HAS MADE AN EFFORT TO STAY OUT OF THE DEBATE ON GM FOOD BY STRESSING ITS NEUTRALITY AND RESPECT FOR THE LAWS OF DONOR AND RECIPIENT GOVERNMENTS, AND LEAVING QUESTIONS OF FOOD SAFETY TO THE UN AGENCIES COMPETENT TO ADDRESS THEM. THIS APPROACH IS REFLECTED IN THE INTERNAL GUIDELINES REPRODUCED BELOW, AS WELL AS IN THE ORGANIZATION'S OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES ON THE DONATION OF FOODS DERIVED FROM MODERN BIOTECHNOLOGY (SUBMITTED TO THE FEBRUARY 2004 SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND ACCEPTED WITHOUT DISCUSSION).

4. (SBU) NOTWITHSTANDING THIS EFFORT, WFP REMAINS A TARGET OF CRITICISM FOR SOME GM OPPONENTS. A RECENT EXAMPLE WAS A 4 MAY 2004 OPEN LETTER FROM A GROUP OF AFRICAN NGOS, WHEREIN THEY "REGISTER[ED] [THEIR] DISQUIET AT THE FAILURE BY THE WFP TO GUARANTEE ANGOLA AND SUDAN THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE WHETHER OR NOT TO ACCEPT THE GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOOD AID ... WFP AND OTHER DONORS HAVE MISLED THESE GOVERNMENTS BY PRESENTING THEM A SCENARIO OF NO CHOICE: THAT THEY EITHER ACCEPT GM FOOD OR FACE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES."

5. (SBU) THE RECENT FAO REPORT ON THE STATE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE -- WHICH PRESENTS A NUANCED BUT LARGELY POSITIVE VIEW OF AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGY (REFTEL) -- MAY HELP TONE DOWN SOME OF THE RHETORIC GRADUALLY. NEVERTHELESS, THE ISSUE WILL NOT GO AWAY QUICKLY. IT WILL LIKELY CONTINUE TO BE EXPLOITED BY ACTIVISTS AND OTHERS WITH THEIR OWN AGENDAS. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND WFP HAS HAD TO STRIKE A DELICATE BALANCE BETWEEN THE CONCERNS OF SOME FOOD AID RECIPIENTS (IRRATIONAL AS THEY MIGHT SEEM) AND THE SCIENTIFIC AND ECONOMIC REALITIES OF MODERN-DAY PRODUCTION OF AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES. WE THINK IT HAS BEEN LARGELY SUCCESSFUL IN FINDING THAT BALANCE.

6. (SBU) THE REALITY FOR WFP AND FOOD AID RECIPIENT COUNTRIES IS THAT: (A) THE U.S. CONTINUES YEAR AFTER YEAR

TO SUPPLY OVER HALF OF ALL GLOBAL FOOD AID; AND (B) THE U.S. IS BY FAR THE LARGEST CONTRIBUTOR TO WFP (1992-2003) \$8.79 BILLION (44 PERCENT). THE U.S. ALSO HAS THE ABILITY (UNLIKE SOME OTHER MAJOR DONORS) TO DELIVER ITS DONATIONS FAIRLY EFFICIENTLY. HENCE WFP MANAGERS HAVE FEW READILY AVAILABLE ALTERNATIVES TO U.S. COMMODITY

ROME 00002657 002 OF 006

COVER LETTER TO WFP STAFF FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

BEGIN TEXT:

FEW OTHER ISSUES HAVE GENERATED SO MUCH DEBATE IN RECENT YEARS AS THE ADVENT OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS. UNFORTUNATELY, WFP HAS OFTEN FOUND ITSELF IN THE MIDDLE OF CONTROVERSY AS DONOR AND RECIPIENT GOVERNMENTS DEBATED THEIR OWN POLICIES ON THIS NEW TECHNOLOGY.

ESSENTIALLY, OUR POSITION IS NEUTRAL. WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO MOBILIZE AS MUCH SAFE, HEALTHY FOOD AS POSSIBLE FOR THE WORLD'S HUNGRY. IN THIS CASE, AS IN ALL OTHERS, WFP RESPECTS THE LAWS AND REGULATIONS OF BOTH DONOR AND RECIPIENT GOVERNMENTS CONCERNING THE IMPORT OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS. ALL OF THE FOOD WE DISTRIBUTE HAS BEEN CERTIFIED SAFE FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION.

MANY OF YOU HAVE BEEN, AND WILL CONTINUE TO FIND YOURSELF ASKED QUESTIONS BY GOVERNMENTS, PARTNERS, MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC ABOUT THIS ISSUE. I URGE YOU TO READ THE CORPORATE MESSAGE BELOW, AND POLICY DOCUMENTS LISTED AT THE END OF IT. IN PARTICULAR, THE EXECUTIVE BOARD PAPERS DETAILING OUR POLICY ON DONATIONS OF FOODS DERIVED FROM BIOTECHNOLOGY AND THE OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES INCLUDE KEY INFORMATION ON HOW WFP OFFICES AROUND THE WORLD NEED TO DEAL WITH FOOD WHICH MAY BE GENETICALLY MODIFIED.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT THE PEOPLE LISTED [NEIL GALLAGHER, DIRECTOR, COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION, AND ALLAN JURY, CHIEF, FOOD SECURITY, SAFETY NETS AND RELIEF SERVICES].

CORPORATE MESSAGE: WFP AND GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOOD

INTERNAL USE ONLY

DO SAY:

OUR RESPONSIBILITY IS TO MOBILIZE AS MUCH SAFE, HEALTHY FOOD AS POSSIBLE FOR THE WORLD'S HUNGRY.

THE SAME FOOD DISTRIBUTED BY WFP, INCLUDING GM PRODUCTS, IS REGULARLY EATEN BY PEOPLE IN TORONTO, JOHANNESBURG, BOSTON, AND BUENOS AIRES.

ALL FOOD DISTRIBUTED BY WFP HAS BEEN TESTED AND FOUND SAFE TO EAT IN BOTH DONOR AND RECIPIENT COUNTRIES.

WHO AND FAO ARE THE AGENCIES BEST QUALIFIED TO COMMENT ON THE SAFETY OF GM FOODS, AND THEY STATE THAT THERE ARE NO KNOWN HEALTH RISKS.

WFP ABIDES BY ANY IMPORT REGULATIONS RELATED TO GM FOODS WHICH MAY BE BROUGHT INTO OR TRANSIT HOST COUNTRIES.

GOVERNMENTS ARE FREE TO CHOOSE WHETHER OR NOT TO ACCEPT GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS. WFP WILL DO ITS BEST TO IDENTIFY ALTERNATIVES, BUT CANNOT ALWAYS GUARANTEE NON-GM FOOD WILL BE AVAILABLE FROM DONORS.

DO NOT SAY

WHETHER YOU PERSONALLY THINK GM FOODS ARE A GOOD OR BAD THING.

THAT YOU PERSONALLY AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH A GOVERNMENT'S POLICY ON GM FOODS. WFP MUST RESPECT WHATEVER POLICY AND LEGISLATION IS IN PLACE.

WFP'S ADVOCACY GOAL

(1.) MAXIMISE THE AMOUNT OF FOOD AID AVAILABLE TO HUNGRY

ROME 00002657 003 OF 006

IFIED FOOD.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO:

(1.) MONITOR ANY PUBLIC/GOVERNMENT DEBATE IN YOUR COUNTRY ON GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS. FIND OUT WHETHER OR NOT YOUR HOST GOVERNMENT HAS IMPORT

RESTRICTIONS ON GM/BIOTECH FOODSTUFFS. FIND OUT WHICH FOODS THESE REGULATIONS REFER TO (E.G. WHOLE GRAINS, MILLED OR PROCESSED CEREALS, VEGETABLE OILS DERIVED FROM GM COMMODITIES SUCH AS SOYBEANS DO NOT THEMSELVES HAVE GM CONTENT AND HAVE NOT BEEN AN ISSUE OF CONTENTION IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE).

(2.) NOTIFY THE RELEVANT UNITS IN HQ (SHIPPING, PROGRAMMING, DONOR RELATIONS, ETC) ON THE NATURE OF ANY RESTRICTIONS ON GM FOODS, AND ANY CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT POLICY.

(3.) ENSURE ALL STAFF UNDERSTAND AND CAN RELATE WFP'S POSITION ON GMOS.

(4.) FOLLOW THE WFP POLICY ON DONATIONS OF FOODS DERIVED FROM BIOTECHNOLOGY OUTLINED IN WFP/EB.3/2002/4-C AND WFP/EB.A/2003/5-B/REV.1 AND THE OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES IN WFP/EB.1/2004/10-C.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR WFP STAFF

(1.) DOES WFP DISTRIBUTE GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS?

YES, BUT ONLY IN COUNTRIES ACCEPTING SUCH FOODS. WE DO NOT DISTRIBUTE GM FOODS IN COUNTRIES THAT HAVE ENACTED LEGISLATION OR IMPORT REGULATIONS WHICH RESTRICT THE USE OF THESE FOODS. DETAILS VARY FROM COUNTRY TO COUNTRY ON WHETHER OR NOT PROCESSED FOODS (E.G. BLENDED FOODS) ARE INCLUDED IN THE RESTRICTIONS, OR WHETHER THEY REFER ONLY TO WHOLE GRAINS AND/OR SEEDS.

(2.) HOW MANY WFP BENEFICIARIES HAVE RECEIVED GM FOODS?

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY WITH ANY PRECISION, BUT THERE IS A GROWING VOLUME OF GM FOOD IN GLOBAL PRODUCTION AND TRADE AND IN FOOD AID DONATIONS TO WFP. THEREFORE IT IS LIKELY THAT TENS OF MILLIONS OF BENEFICIARIES HAVE SAFELY CONSUMED GM FOOD PROVIDED BY WFP.

(3.) HAS WFP EVER RECEIVED ANY COMPLAINTS OF ILLNESS OR ALLERGIC REACTIONS AS A RESULT OF BENEFICIARIES EATING FOOD THAT MAY HAVE CONTAINED GMOS?

WFP HAS NEVER RECEIVED ANY REPORT OF ILLNESS OR ALLERGIC REACTIONS TO GM FOOD. IN A JOINT STATEMENT ISSUED IN AUGUST 2002, WHO, FAO AND WFP CONFIRMED THAT THEY ARE NOT AWARE OF ANY SCIENTIFICALLY DOCUMENTED CASES IN WHICH THE CONSUMPTION OF GM FOOD HAS HAD NEGATIVE EFFECTS ON HUMAN HEALTH AND THAT THESE FOODS MAY BE SAFELY EATEN.

(4.) WHAT KINDS OF WFP FOOD AID MAY BE GM?

THE MAIN COMMODITIES CONCERNED INCLUDE MAIZE (CORN) AND SOYBEANS (OFTEN USED IN BLENDED FOODS). THESE COMMODITIES ARE OFTEN INCLUDED IN STANDARD WFP RATIONS.

(5.) WHAT PORTION OF WFP FOOD AID IS GM?

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY, AS FEW MAJOR GM-PRODUCING NATIONS SEPARATE GM FROM NON-GM COMMODITIES. WE DO KNOW THAT MANY OF THE PRODUCERS OF GM FOOD (THE UNITED STATES, AUSTRALIA, ARGENTINA, SOUTH AFRICA, CANADA, AND CHINA) ARE AMONG THOSE FROM WHICH WFP TRADITIONALLY SOURCES ITS FOOD AID.

(6.) WHAT IS WFP'S POLICY ON GM FOOD?

WFP'S POLICY ON GM FOOD IS TO RESPECT THE DECISIONS OF ALL GOVERNMENTS, WHETHER THEY RELATE TO IMPORTING FOOD

ROME 00002657 004 OF 006

T TO PURCHASE FOOD THAT MAY BE GM WITH THEIR CASH DONATIONS. SEVERAL DONORS (GERMANY, NORWAY, BELGIUM, AND SWITZERLAND) HAVE REQUESTED THAT THEIR CASH CONTRIBUTIONS NOT BE USED TO PURCHASE GM FOODS AT THIS TIME.

OUR BROADER POLICY REMAINS: ALL FOOD DISTRIBUTED BY THE PROGRAMME MUST MEET INTERNATIONALLY MANDATED STANDARDS FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY AND BE CERTIFIED TO BE FIT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION.

(7.) WHAT IS THE UNITED NATIONS' POLICY ON GM FOOD?

IN THE MOST RECENT UN STATEMENT, ISSUED IN AUGUST 2002, THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION AND WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME CONFIRMED THAT THEY WERE NOT AWARE OF ANY SCIENTIFICALLY DOCUMENTED CASES IN WHICH THE CONSUMPTION OF FOODS CONTAINING GMOS HAD HAD ANY NEGATIVE EFFECTS ON HUMAN HEALTH.

IN JULY 2003, THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS (A JOINT ACTIVITY OF

FAO AND WHO) ADOPTED THREE INTERNATIONALLY AGREED UPON STANDARDS FOR SCIENTIFICALLY ASSESSING FOOD DERIVED FROM BIOTECHNOLOGY. "PRINCIPLES FOR RISK ANALYSIS OF FOODS DERIVED FROM MODERN BIOTECHNOLOGY", "GUIDELINES FOR THE CONDUCT OF FOOD SAFETY ASSESSMENT OF FOODS DERIVED FROM RECOMBINANT-DNA PLANTS" AND "GUIDELINES FOR THE CONDUCT OF FOOD SAFETY ASSESSMENT OF FOODS PRODUCED USING RECOMBINANT-DNA MICRO-ORGANISMS" WHICH WILL STANDARDIZE THE PROCEDURES FOR JUDGING THE SAFETY OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS ONCE IMPLEMENTED IN MEMBER STATES OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS.

FAO'S STATE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE 2003-04 CONCLUDED THAT BIOTECHNOLOGY OFFERS SIGNIFICANT OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE THE AVAILABILITY AND VARIETY OF FOOD, RAISING OVERALL AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY WHILE REDUCING SEASONAL VARIATIONS IN FOOD SUPPLIES. THE EMERGING EVIDENCE ON THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TRANSGENIC CROPS SURVEYED IN THIS REPORT SUGGESTS THAT RESOURCE-POOR SMALLHOLDERS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES CAN BENEFIT IN TERMS OF BOTH ENHANCED INCOMES AND REDUCED EXPOSURE TO TOXIC AGRICULTURAL CHEMICALS. BUT SO FAR ONLY A FEW FARMERS IN A FEW DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ARE REAPING THESE BENEFITS. THERE IS STRONG CONSENSUS AMONG SCIENTISTS CONCERNING THE NEED FOR A CASE-BY-CASE EVALUATION THAT CONSIDERS THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS OF INDIVIDUAL GMOS COMPARED WITH ALTERNATIVE TECHNOLOGIES. (SEE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS ABOVE).

(8.) DOES WFP INDICATE WHICH SHIPMENTS MIGHT BE GM, OR LABEL FOOD CONTAINERS?

AS PARTIES TO THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL MAY REQUIRE DOCUMENTATION OF 'LIVING MODIFIED ORGANISMS', WFP WILL INCLUDE A DECLARATION ON THE COMMERCIAL INVOICE

ACCOMPANYING ALL SHIPMENTS OF WHOLE GRAIN MAIZE OR SOYBEANS TO OR THROUGH COUNTRIES WHICH ARE PARTIES TO THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL. WHOLE KERNEL MAIZE AND SOYBEANS ARE CURRENTLY THE ONLY COMMODITIES HANDLED BY WFP THAT ARE CONSIDERED 'LIVING MODIFIED ORGANISMS' SINCE THEY CAN BE PLANTED. THE DECLARATION WILL READ: 'CARTAGENA PROTOCOL PROVISION. THIS SHIPMENT MAY CONTAIN "LIVING MODIFIED ORGANISMS INTENDED FOR DIRECT USE AS FOOD OR FEED, OR FOR PROCESSING" THAT ARE NOT INTENDED FOR INTRODUCTION INTO THE ENVIRONMENT.' (THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL IS NOT INTENDED TO REGULATE TRADE IN FOOD PRODUCTS, BUT APPLIES ONLY TO TRADE IN SEEDS AND OTHER LIVE GENETIC MATERIALS.)

ANY NEED FOR FURTHER DOCUMENTATION, OR LABELLING OF FOOD CONTAINERS, WILL BE ADDRESSED ON A COUNTRY-BY-COUNTRY BASIS, DEPENDING ON EACH COUNTRY'S REQUIREMENTS.

(9.) WHAT IS THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK WHICH GOVERNS DONATIONS OF GM FOOD?

FROM A LEGAL STANDPOINT, ALL FOOD AID MUST ADHERE TO THE SAME LAWS AND INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS THAT APPLY TO

ROME 00002657 005 OF 006

ON BIOSAFETY ONLY GOVERNS THE TRANSBOUNDARY MOVEMENT OF LIVING MODIFIED ORGANISMS INTENDED FOR USE AS FOOD OR FEED; IT DOES NOT INCLUDE PROCESSED FOODS SUCH AS CSB, VEGETABLE OIL ETC. THE PROTOCOL ENTERED INTO FORCE IN SEPTEMBER 2003, AND THOSE NATIONS THAT RATIFIED THE PROTOCOL ARE NOW ADAPTING THEIR IMPORT REGIMES TO REFLECT ITS PROVISIONS. WFP WILL CONTINUE TO ABIDE BY WHATEVER NATIONAL LEGISLATION IS PUT IN PLACE REGARDING THE IMPORT OF FOOD AID, INCLUDING ANY RESTRICTIONS ON GM FOODS.

(10.) IS WFP INVOLVED IN 'DUMPING' GMO COMMODITIES ON THE POOR?

NO. GLOBAL FOOD AID REPRESENTS LESS THAN ONE PERCENT OF THE 1.5 BILLION TONS OF GRAINS CONSUMED GLOBALLY EACH YEAR. THE FOOD AID MARKET IS HARDLY RICH PICKINGS IN AN INTERNATIONAL TRADE MARKET VALUED AT \$583 BILLION A YEAR. OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, THE PRICE OF MAIZE AND SOYBEANS WORLDWIDE HAS ACTUALLY RISEN SO THERE IS NO NEED FOR EXPORTERS TO "DUMP" UNWANTED GM COMMODITIES THAT THEY COULD HAVE BEEN SOLD PROFITABLY ON THE INTERNATIONAL MARKET. SINCE COMMODITIES ARE GENERALLY NOT SEGREGATED ACCORDING TO WHETHER OR NOT THEY MIGHT BE GM, IT WOULD BE QUITE DIFFICULT TO 'DUMP' THEM SEPARATELY IN ANY EVENT.

ADDITIONALLY, DONORS TO WFP ARE REQUIRED TO PAY ALL TRANSPORT, ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH COMMODITY DONATIONS, AND THESE OFTEN AMOUNT TO MORE THAN THE COST OF THE FOOD ITSELF. FROM AN ECONOMIC VANTAGE POINT, FOOD AID IS A HIGHLY INEFFICIENT WAY TO DISPOSE OF FOOD SURPLUSES. THERE ARE FAR CHEAPER WAYS FOR EXPORTING NATIONS TO REDUCE THEIR SUPPLIES OF FOOD, SUCH AS DISCOUNTS, EXPORT SUBSIDIES ETC.

(11.) HAS WFP EVER FORCED A COUNTRY TO ACCEPT FOODS CONTAINING GMOS?

NO. WFP RESPECTS THE POLICIES OF ITS DONOR AND RECIPIENT COUNTRIES ON FOODS DERIVED FROM MODERN BIOTECHNOLOGY. WFP IS NOT A TECHNICAL AGENCY; WE CANNOT PROVIDE GUIDANCE ON THE SAFETY OR ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS OF GMOS, OTHER THAN REITERATING THE OFFICIAL UN POSITION (SEE ABOVE). WE SHOULD, HOWEVER, ADVISE HOST COUNTRIES OF THE POTENTIAL IMPACT LEGISLATION ON GM FOODS MIGHT HAVE ON THE AVAILABILITY OF FOOD AID, IF THAT COUNTRY HAS TRADITIONALLY RECEIVED FOOD FROM COUNTRIES THAT GROW GM COMMODITIES.

WHEN REQUESTED TO DO SO, WFP DOES ITS BEST TO IDENTIFY OTHER NON-GM SOURCES OF FOOD AID. AS A VOLUNTARILY FUNDED AGENCY, OUR SUCCESS IN DOING THAT DEPENDS ENTIRELY ON DONORS PROVIDING ALTERNATIVE COMMODITIES OR CASH TO PURCHASE THEM.

IN SOUTHERN AFRICA IN 2002, SEVERAL GOVERNMENTS RAISED QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW TO HANDLE FOOD AID THAT CONTAINED GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS. EVENTUALLY, ALL OF THE COUNTRIES CONCERNED, EXCEPT ZAMBIA, ELECTED TO ACCEPT GM FOODS AS LONG AS THEY WERE MILLED OR PROCESSED, WHICH WFP ENSURED. ZAMBIA DECLINED ANY FOOD WITH A POTENTIAL GM CONTENT. WFP MANAGED, AT CONSIDERABLE EXPENSE AND DELAY, TO IDENTIFY NON-GM FOOD FOR ZAMBIA'S FOOD AID NEEDS.

(12.) WHAT KIND OF IMPACT CAN THE DECISION TO BAN GMOS HAVE ON FOOD AID AVAILABILITY AND THE HUNGRY?

IF A COUNTRY DECIDES NOT TO PERMIT THE IMPORTATION OF FOOD WITH A GENETICALLY MODIFIED CONTENT, WFP WILL TRY TO IDENTIFY ALTERNATIVES, ALL OF WHICH MAY IMPLY HIGHER COSTS, FEWER BENEFICIARIES REACHED AND POTENTIAL DELAYS FOR FOOD AID DELIVERIES.

- WHILE WHOLE GRAIN MAIZE OR SOYBEANS MIGHT NOT BE PERMITTED, MILLED MAIZE OR PROCESSED SOY MIGHT BE. MILLING AND PROCESSING NOT ONLY HAVE AN ADDED COST PER TON, BUT MILLED AND PROCESSED PRODUCTS ALSO HAVE A SHORTER SHELF-LIFE AND MORE COMPLEX TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS REQUIREMENTS.

ROME 00002657 006 OF 006

OF MONEY. IT IS APPROPRIATE FOR WFP TO PROVIDE INFO ON HOW A PARTICULAR REGULATION MIGHT AFFECT WFP OPERATIONS IN THE COUNTRY IN QUESTION. THIS INFORMATION SHOULD BE FACTUAL AND COUNTRY-SPECIFIC, AND MAY INCLUDE INFORMATION ON THE PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS NECESSARY FOR WFP TO COMPLY WITH ANY PROPOSED NEW REGULATION.

(13.) WHAT ABOUT THE CONCERNS REGARDING GM SEEDS ENTERING THE ENVIRONMENT?

WFP DOES NOT GENERALLY DISTRIBUTE SEEDS. IT MAY HAPPEN THAT WHOLE GRAIN MAIZE OR SOYBEANS WOULD BE PLANTED, BUT GIVEN THAT MOST OF OUR FOOD IS GIVEN IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS, PEOPLE ARE FAR MORE LIKELY TO EAT THEIR RATIONS THAN PLANT THEM. FOR MOST FOOD COMMODITIES, THE OPTION OF MILLING OR PROCESSING THE WHOLE KERNELS ALLAYS THIS CONCERN.

END TEXT.

17. (U) KHARTOUM MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.

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